

# THE CEA CRITIC

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## Freshman Composition Target

Freshman Composition is, obviously, a course given to freshmen in college, although, not so obviously, part of it is sometimes given in the sophomore year, and also, not so obviously, it numbers among its students quite a few sophomores and an occasional college junior or even a senior. Its students range in age from fifteen years to thirty-five years (since the war), with the average age being eighteen or nineteen. Its students range also, on a percentile scale of intelligence and background-English training, from the upper levels reaching 100 (of whom there are fortunately some) down to and approaching 0 (of whom there are far too many). They come from every conceivable kind of high school—vocational, commercial, general educational, college preparatory; from every conceivable kind of community—rural, township, small town, large town, urban, metropolitan—but they all come with a common achievement: a high school diploma.

These students vary in their interests from A to Z, from agronomists who plan to become practical farmers to zoologists who plan to become specialized scientists. In between are those seeking a general education, a liberal education, a vocational education, or a pre-professional education. In the course of Freshman Composition, the illiterate become semi-

(Concluded on page 8, col. 1)

## Pleasant Example Of Cooperative Scholarship

Acheson L. Hench, University of Virginia, has been working with a committee headed by I. Willis Russell, of the University of Alabama, which gathers the changing vocabulary of the day. It is a committee of the American Dialect Society and it publishes its collection (a) as the "Among the New Words" section of the journal *American Speech*, and (b) as *New Words of the Year* in the *Britannica Book of the Year*. Prof. Hench writes that "working with as interesting a group as it is and under so capable and considerate a chairman as we have, we enjoy the association greatly. It is a pleasant example of cooperative scholarship."

## Homage To Burges Johnson

Educational Circuit Rider  
Par Excellence

APR 8 1950

At the luncheon held in his honor Saturday, February 11, 1950, at the University of New Mexico, Burges Johnson was the inspiration to several tributes to his many-sided talents and contributions to our twin profession of teaching and letters. He was highly lauded "as a teacher, writer, and light-in-general on the academic horizon." Miss Jane Kluckohn spoke on "Burges as a Poet," Miss Julia Keleher reviewed *The Lost Art of Profanity*, under the topic, "Burges as a Profaner."

Dr. Charles D. Reid, who was on the faculty of the University of Syracuse Medical School at the time Burges was there, spoke on the topic "Burges as an Actor."

Prof. T. M. Pearce presided, and Burges Johnson responded with some verses composed in retaliation to the toastmaster and Dr. Reid. Expressing his gratification at the warmth of good-fellowship, and spirit of admiration which

characterized the testimonial occasion, Prof. Pearce has declared: "Burges Johnson, Durham, N. H., of educational circuit rider. He says that now he has found a rare treasure of a house in his native state of Vermont (although the postoffice is in Massachusetts), he may not make his fall trek again."

"Burges has said for the last several years that he was like Sarah Bernhardt, always repeating a farewell tour. He certainly seems none the worse for the wear, and I hope he changes his mind. His statement, however, did give us an opportunity to honor him with this testimonial luncheon. He was our house guest, and he left on Sunday morning with the threat of a snowstorm and had to have chains to carry him through a mountain pass or two. But on he went with that kind of dauntless clearheadedness that takes him and others in the right direction."

## Spring Regional Meetings

INDIANA

The meeting this year will be held at Indiana University, Bloomington, on Friday and Saturday, May 12 and 13, with the Indiana University Department of English as host.

Dr. Gordon Keith Chalmers, president of Kenyon College and of the national College English Association will be the speaker at the conference dinner, Friday, May 12.

NEW ENGLAND

President Morse Allen (Trinity) and Vice President Alan McGee (Mount Holyoke) together with Max Goldberg joined Frederick Hilles, chairman of the English Department at Yale, and Norman Pearson (N. E. regional director), of the same department, in discussion of plans for the annual spring conference of the N.E. C.E.A., to be held at Yale, on Saturday, May 6.

Norman Pearson, program chairman, has recently given Morse Allen a progress report. William Clyde De Vane, dean of Yale College and past president of the national College English Association, will greet the delegates.

PENNSYLVANIA

The Southeastern Pennsylvania section is planning a Spring meeting to be held at Lafayette College on a weekend within the latter half of April. Bruce Dearing, of Swarthmore, is chairman of the program committee, and Kenneth D. Longsdorf, of Franklin and Marshall, is chairman for publicity and attendance. W. W. Watt and G. H. Magnus of Lafayette have generously undertaken special duties, on behalf of the conference, at the host institution. The meeting will be open to all persons interested in college teaching. There will be an election of officers and some profitable discussion of literary and teaching problems. Francis C. Mason, of Gettysburg College, is group president.

NEW YORK STATE

President George M. Kahrl informs us that one preliminary notice has already been given out concerning the regional spring conference, to be held at Cornell on Saturday, April 22, in connection with the University's Wordsworth centennial celebration.

## The New Criticism Contemplates The Fireworks On The Fifth of July

Many of us now feel, I am sure, that literature as traditionally considered is meaningless to the living youth of today. And now the time has come for us as teachers of literature to know where we intend to take our stand in regard to the "New Criticism." So I propose, first, to make an inquiry into *The Theory of Literature* by Warren and Wellek; and second, to define modern functional esthetics and to indicate how it is applicable to the evaluation of literature.

As I have studied *The Theory of Literature* it seems to have become more and more evident that the title is either a grave semantic blunder, or a device of propaganda for the "New Criticism." In its preface it purports to be "unique," and implies that a more proper title would have been "Theory of Literature and Methodology of Literary Study." What, apparently, it is intended to be is a compendium of things that have been done during all known cultural history in the study of something called literature as a branch of learning. And if one can maintain a complete obduracy to everything the authors say about these attempts in the field of literature, it may be regarded as a survey—a survey, however, that skips over or misinterprets everything that the two very congenial authors don't approve of or else misunderstand.

(Continued on page 4, col. 1)

## SAVANNAH STATE COLLEGE

On January 10, 1950, we opened our English Workshop, designed to help students who are poor as to English fundamentals. The Workshop meets twice a week from 12:00 noon till 1:20 p.m. A schedule of topics (January to June) has been distributed; hence a glance at the schedule informs one as to the days on which his problems are to be considered. Geared to the student's needs, entirely voluntary and informal, the English Workshop becomes growingly meaningful here at Savannah State College.

J. Randolph Fisher  
Chairman, Department of  
Language and Literature,  
Savannah State College  
Savannah, Georgia

## THE CEA CRITIC

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## Ph. D. Doldrums

## AGAIN . . . OR STILL?

## Magic Letters Equal Master Key

The publishing and noticing of *Goals for American Education*, a symposium edited by Lyman Bryson, Louis Finkelstein, and R. M. MacIvor (Harper, \$5.00) again pushes to the fore a professional issue with which our Association, has been persistently and pugnaciously pre-occupied, and which remains a leading item on its agenda of unfinished business. That is the issue of the Ph.D. curriculum, especially vis a vis the training of teachers of English at what is so often referred to (with unintentional yet symptomatic evaluative implication) "the undergraduate level."

Reviewing the symposium, in the *New York Times* for Sunday, March 5, 1950 (*Book Review*, p. 18) Alvin Johnson reports that "almost all the authors are eloquent on what is wrong with American education." In fact, he finds that only two, George N. Shuster (president of Hunter College and of the World Student Service Fund), and Harold Taylor (president of Sarah Lawrence College), "find anything right with it."

"Our authors", further reports the president emeritus of the New School of Social Research, "look in vain for goals toward which the college students are striving." Nor does he find the contributors "better pleased with the results of

graduate study." As they see it, "Extreme specialization dominates. The Ph.D. theses reveal that four-fifths of their authors will never do creative work."

Evaluating the attitude of the symposiasts toward our graduate students and their programs, Mr. Johnson wryly observes: "As for the unhappy Ph.D.'s, the attack comes with bad grace from professional educators"; and he goes on to ask, ironically: "Does the aspirant for a teaching position want to devote three years of puzzling over the accounting methods of Hammurabi's empire, while the whole world of Levantine history lies open for exploration?" Himself giving the answer to this rhetorical question, Mr. Johnson points right to the twisted crux of the problem: "Of course not, but the magic letters are the master key to teaching jobs."

And how resolve the crux? Here the plain-speaking commentator once again highlights the ironic discrepancy between what is and what reason and common sense, as well as our instinct for cultural survival, tell us ought to be:

"You would suppose that by this time educators would have made up their minds to confine the Ph.D. to preparation for a life of research, and devise another degree based on a well stocked mind for those who wish to teach."

Dr. Johnson goes further and tersely concludes: "But the dead hand of scholasticism keeps its grip on academic tradition and policy."

## The Dead Hand of Scholasticism

All too familiar, by now, is that conclusion—to us in C.E.A. who have been pleading and working for more than superficial, secondary, and peripheral reform of the Ph.D. curriculum in English and allied fields. At our national conferences, at our regional meetings, in the columns of the CRITIC, in executive correspondence and committee effort, we have repeatedly called attention to the cultural and professional atrophy with which our teachers and students have been threatened by the moribund grip of the "dead hand of scholasticism" on "tradition and policy" in our province.

## Willing To Go Places

I am sure you will find the members highly responsive to wise leadership, such as only an executive secretary is in a position to give. They strike me as a pretty eager lot, willing to go places. If I can help, let me know.

Norman Foerster

## Commentary

## Re: McGee Remarks

## On Academic Freedom

"Were I an administrator I would not normally welcome Communists to my faculty because my feeling is that the party-line and the free mind are incompatible. By the 'free mind' I mean the mind prepared to examine data in the hope of arriving at conclusions implicit in the data rather than under compulsion to make the data fit into a priori principles. In many cases I don't think that communists or any persons holding to a schematology based on faith and zealous conviction can exercise the free mind."

"My contention is THAT THE MATTER MUST BE LEFT TO ADMINISTRATIVE DISCRETION. TO ATTEMPT TO LEGISLATE IT, IS TO DESTROY ACADEMIC FREEDOM. First, because no legislation is capable of phrasing the idea without danger to broader principles. Secondly, because the drive toward such legislation is like a forest fire—after a point it may become impossible to stop it. Third, because by and large our administrators are certainly more competent to make these decisions than our legislators. A majority of the democratic vote from Ward 14 hardly qualifies Joe O'Shea as a director of the college curriculum."

"The main point is the distinction between administrative discretion and legislation. An important additional consideration: our schools are, almost without exception, directed by conservative trustees. If anything, their tendency is likely to push things toward the right than toward the left. The trustees themselves are all the safeguards education can stand against the left. In many cases they are even more safeguard than is desirable. A College is a place for exchanging ideas, not for suppressing them."

John Ciardi

Hence Loathed  
Stiffness and Formality!

I've always felt that the C.E.A. was the organization that had most to offer to college teachers of English. Our meetings in Western New York State have always been great fun—very friendly and informal. Please, if you can, keep the organization from the stiffness and formality that too often seem to come with age!

Ellsworth Barnard, Alfred Univ.  
Past President, New York C.E.A.

## Re: Aldridge Report

## On Vermont Symposium

It is a doubtful generalization to compare the subjectivism of Wolfe, Hemingway and Fitzgerald with the preoccupation with masses of people that Mr. Aldridge finds in current writers, and to suggest this approach per se as a cause of decline. I should also question the conclusion that life in the thirties and forties was not different enough from the preceding period to bring new movements in novel writing. The speaker says that life in the two last decades was one of events rather than ideas. I suggest that, instead of dearth, the novelist has been exposed to too much—ideas and events—to synthesize (if he is to be conceived as a synthesizer of his moment and milieu). I add here parenthetically that this partly accounts for the popularity of the historical and/or religious novel (preferably combined), which, even at the lowest levels, where stock responses are usually so well-known by publishers, provides a moment and a milieu not too closely related to America in the thirties and forties.

The symposium at Vermont was a novel (!) experiment, and an excellent idea. Its work could continue to be suggestive rather than definitive.

Doris Kirk Holmes  
Wellesley College

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# I've Been Reading

J. GORDON EAKER, JERSEY CITY JUNIOR COLLEGE, LITERARY EDITOR

## WORDS INTO PLOWSHARES?

On 24 October 1949, E. P. Dutton & Co. published a book of overseas-combat poetry, *Words Into Steel* (\$2.75), by Hargis Westfield, City College. This book, "written in understandable American English, with a versification freely adapted from the Old English," was based on the author's experience as a rifleman in G Company 163 Infantry in the New Guinea and Southern Philippine Campaigns. The Army had trained him as a Finance man; but he wasn't bred for a non-combat job. He volunteered from Regional Accounting Office in Brisbane into New Guinea Infantry. He was wounded once, and suffered the usual fevers. According to our report, he was one of the few combat infantrymen in the Modern Language Association; out of 1250 who served in the "Armed Forces," they found some twelve Combat Infantry Badges and eight Purple Hearts. He has one of both. *Infantry Journal* has already purchased a series of *Words Into Steel* poems for republication. "Metaphysical at Aitape" appeared in the January, 1950 issue; and "The Fox-Hole" is current.

M. G.

There are important professional tasks to be undertaken, and I hope C.E.A. can be active in every way.

Harry R. Warfel  
University of Florida

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*Stanford Short Stories, 1949*, Edited by Wallace Stegner (Stanford University Press, 165 pp., \$3.00).

All the stories in this third collection from Wallace Stegner's classes at Stanford are good stories. Each has an idea that holds one, each shows a feeling for style and artistic pruning, and no one of the twelve authors fails to transfer a real experience. A convincing character facing a conflict or heightened mood is still a sure recipe for a good story.

The settings here are usually in the West, or Tennessee or Kentucky, though three vivid ones are War scenes. "I'll Take You to Tennessee" by Evan Connell pictures Logos Jackson, the story teller steeped in mountain folklore, taking youngsters fishing, where Maxine wanders off in the woods and draws him after her into the dark. It won the \$500 Edith Mirrielees Award. "What Seems to be the Matter Here?" by Richard K. Arnold is an unforgettable portrait of a loathsome uncle and his infatuation for a female dog. These two first ones strike the naturalistic keynote of the collection.

"Anthem of the Locusts" by Dean Cadle, a Kentucky love idyll against the background of a primitive revival meeting, is more cheerful. Mr. Cadle's other selection, "The Wedding Warriors," told with the natural zest of a Huck Finn or Bret Harte, has the indispensable pleasure-giving quality in its yarn of how two Kentucky youngsters express their regret at losing Ruby, who marries the city visitor with the maroon car, by releasing twenty watersnakes from behind the organ during the wedding.

"The Great Creator" by William George echoes the world-conquering, wide-awake mood of a young expectant father, this one a student. "The Iron Stag" by John H. Kendrick shows from a child's point of view and with a bit of symbolism his mother's iron disapproval of his grandfather's new love. In "The Bonds of Brotherhood" by David M. Kirk, army friendship triumphs over starvation and forced labor in a Japanese prison camp in the Philippines.

Oliver Lawrence's "Beyond the Boundary Wall" reveals the heroism never far away from mine work in the conflict between obedience to an employer's order and concern for one's family and self. "Behold a Pale Horse" by Rhoda

LeCoq, one of two pieces by young women, is a slightly theatrical Western on revenge; the heroine finds her maturity in the dynamite blasting of her New Mexico home.

"The Surgeon" by John A. Lynch is the numbing day of Captain Raff as he treats the wounded brought into a house under shell-fire near a mountain that the infantry are invading. In "The Room under the Sea," Clay Putnam, a mere man, tries to capture a woman's attempt to keep a corner of her soul uninvaded by her husband in their California apartment while she longs for her aristocratic home and grandfather in Rome, Georgia.

"Something You Never Forget" by William George (reprinted from the *Atlantic Monthly*) reproduces the intimate conversation of a young couple conquering at last the girl's homesickness and the husband's aversion for her home town. "An Experiment in Biology" by Allan Wendt is worthy of Galsworthy with its sadistic professor killing a guinea pig under a girl student's protest merely to demonstrate the poison of nicotine, already known.

The second woman contributor, Elizabeth Wolfe, in "Russian Christmas" exposes with the vividness of Chekhov a girl's attempt to replace Dostoevsky's story of the poor boy's Christmas Eve in her family celebration by the reading of Dickens' "Christmas Carol" because her American friends are accustomed to reading it.

Only one who has tried to write and teach short stories can appreciate the work and triumph represented by this alight volume.

*London Echoing*, by James Bone with pictures by Muirhead Bone (Dutton, printed in Great Britain, \$5)—The twenty-four drawings for this were made between 1901 and 1942. The chapter "The Two Wars" appeals particularly to those who have not been back since the War and wonder which of the literary landmarks are still standing. The two brothers wrote and illustrated *The London Perambulator* in 1925; *London Echoing* adds 173 pages of historical and literary information to the earlier work.

J. Gordon Eaker

## Estimates And Directives

In the year that I have been a member of C.E.A., I have received something from the organization in the form of the CRITIC. This little paper has brought clarification of some ideas about literature and stimulation of others, especially with regard to teaching, that, I believe, justifies its existence. It might be more valuable than it is at present were the reports of regional meetings reduced to their proper proportions. Not everything said at the meetings seems to be worth the space devoted to it in the little publication. But, on the other hand, if anything good has been said or reported, then it should be given in as complete a form as possible.

Martin Kallich  
South Dakota State College

As I see it, the C.E.A. is primarily an organization to encourage regional meetings of teachers of English twice (or oftener) a year, thus enabling them to keep personally in touch with each other. . . . The C.E.A. can make itself felt through well organized public discussion and debate, particularly on the controversial issues of our profession that need constant airing. The exhibition of noted persons is not enough, however much color and interest may be added by the 'personal appearance.' My impression is that only the meeting of keen minds will satisfy.

Eric W. Carlson  
University of Connecticut

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SCRIBNERS

## Fireworks on the Fifth . . .

(Continued from page 1, col. 4)

To me this quasi-encyclopedic survey is only a framework of propaganda for the "new criticism." It is a very opportune encyclopedia, indeed, for its purpose. And whether it puts me in its category of "older American scholarship" or not, I find its intellectual jiu-jitsu decidedly unscholarly, however casually the loaded dice may seem to fall. I find the running commentary of EVALUATION, on the basis of a concealed base of value, intellectually presumptuous; and furthermore it is an act of intellectual authoritarianism, from my point of view.

In the following analysis of their evaluations, I am not in any way desirous of criticizing the authors for their synthesized viewpoint, nor their very obvious assiduity in pursuing their disciplined scholarship. I am simply trying to show that whatever of learning it may rightly presume to, it in no way touches the problem of teaching literature in a twentieth-century university in America, as that problem has asserted itself in my personal experience.

[In the following condensation of the definitive part of this paper, some of the original citations are omitted, page references occasionally being substituted for the omitted passages.]

One page 78 Wellek writes that "It seems dangerous to ascribe to it [biography] any critical importance. No biological evidence can change or influence critical evaluation." If this referred specifically to social biography, there

might be no objection, but, as is shown later, it is meant to exclude also a consideration of an author's intellectual and artistic experience.

From the authors' expressed doubts as to the artistic value of 'psychological truth' (cf. pp. 82, 88) and 'social truth' (p. 106), one begins to see that in discussing "Literature" the authors are talking about a great mysterious, discrete entity that somehow will justify itself to itself on its own conditions, and may well cause one to wonder whether from the point of view of these authors, life has any validity.

On page 121 they write: "Instead of speculating on such large-scale geistesgeschichte [i.e. climates of opinion], problems of the philosophy of history, and the ultimate integral of civilization, the literary student should [sic] turn his attention to the concrete problem, not yet solved or adequately discussed [!], the question of how ideas actually enter into literature." (And, one might add, How do ideas get out of it?) It should be noted that this is precisely the real problem dealt with by General Semantics (Ideatics)—not by the linguistic semasiology referred to so glibly in this book and in the New Criticism, in general.

Through Part III, then, the authors have condemned all the catalogued approaches to literature as extrinsic, and therefore, from their point of view, spurious.

With Part IV we come to the Intrinsic Study of Literature. Chapter XII (by Wellek) is entitled "The Analysis of a Work of Art." With the philosophical question, What and where is the poem? the author of this chapter has a hard time. After showing us that a poem is not the printed artifact, nor the poem read aloud, nor the experience of the reader or of the author, nor the sum of the experiences of the poem, he defines the "real" poem as a "structure of norms, realized only partially in the actual experience of its many readers," this set of implicit and dynamic norms comprising the work of art as a whole. What all this metaphysical steeplechase comes to in the end is this:

The work of art [that we are to begin with, and fix upon and contemplate and analyze 'objectively'], then, appears as an object of knowledge sui generis [though with membra disiecta up and down cultural history] which has a special ontological status [as a 'thing in space']. It is neither real (like a statue) nor mental (like the experience of light or pain) nor ideal (like a triangle). It is a system

of norms of ideal [sic] concepts which are intersubjective [sic]. They may be assumed to exist [sic] in collective ideology . . .

I think I can honestly say that that sort of quasi-philosophical jugglery could have meant nothing to any student of literature I have had in the last thirty years. In any case, it is the essential core of the medieval epistemology of the authors. And this is the literary perspective that has received such recent acclaim.

Chapter XVI (by Warren) is entitled "The Nature and Modes of Narrative Fiction." To me this chapter sounds like one of Ortega y Gasset's chapters in his work I remember having read in Spanish many years ago entitled "La Deshumanización del Arte," especially a chapter entitled "Hermetismo," which sets forth the idea that the "real novel" in the grand manner of Fiction fabricates a fictive pattern of elements hermetically sealed off from any implication of relation to human existence in such a way that a reader is left prostrate in an alien world from which it is almost impossible for him to summon up enough courage to make his way back to human existence. On page 221 Dr. Warren writes:

But the novelist offers less a case than a world . . . recognizable as overlapping the empirical world, but distinct [i.e. fictitious] in its self-coherent intelligibility . . . This world or Kosmos of a novelist—this pattern or structure or organism, which includes, plot, characters, setting, world-view [not of the real world], "tone"—is what we must scrutinize when we attempt to compare a novel with life, or to judge, ethically or socially, a novelist's work. [But, of course, this is wholly "extrinsic."]

The discussion of fiction in this chapter is, I imagine, meant to show that the conventions of "objectivity" are not very easily applicable to narrative. For what has happened to the "theory of norms"? Obviously, if each work of fiction creates a mode of existence of its own, fabricated out of the fictive inventiveness of the particular author, that is, subjectively, the norms must be a new set for each new work of fiction.

Chapter XVIII (by Warren) is entitled "Evaluation." As might be expected, this is merely the underscoring of the combined points of view of the two authors, for they are nearly one—though Wellek seems to follow the pattern of a typical European Aristotelian thinker, and Warren that of a typical academic repudiator of American thought and life.

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Let me briefly review the gist of all this cited material. On what grounds have these evaluators based their wholesale dismissal of most of the literary studies they have presented? The basis of "value" implicit in the whole book is sheer antique Aristotelianism, viz.:

"Literature" is a discrete category; it has a "value" of its own, sui generis, sub aeternitate, or whatever else.

We must avoid considering any relationship outside this absolute category. "Its prime and chief 'function' is fidelity to its own nature." This depends only on theory, which is sacrosanct and unrelated to practice (that is, to human experiencing).

Therefore, the authors exclude biography as irrelevant, because a real artist works only with established norms.

(Continued on page 5, col. 1)

### Request Granted

Please send me . . . a copy of the September 1949 issue. I valued so much the excellent review of Wellek and Warren, *The Study of Literature*, that I used it too much and lost it somewhere. I hope you will give us more lively discussion of the new criticism. That review and Professor Amacher's answer were very helpful.

Berenice Cooper  
State College  
1123 North Seventeenth St.  
Superior, Wisconsin

—We are glad to oblige—with a further piece on the New Criticism in this issue.

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(Continued from page 4, col. 4)

The authors show no acquaintance with psychology since Locke. Theirs is purely Aristotelian. Hence, as another discrete category, it is unnecessary to art.

"Social truth," another discrete category, has nothing to do with literature; hence the relation between society and literature establishes no artistic value. Literature has its own justification and aim.

Ideas and Climates of Opinion are of no concern to literature: they belong to the history of sentiment—except, of course, the Aristotelian climate of opinion, which set down for all time the only valid, absolute norms and verities, out of which all esthetic structures must forever be constructed. "Philosophical truth has no artistic value."

"The Intrinsic Study of Literature is a vain attempt to give some ontological "existence" to a work of art,—in a theoretical world of art, discrete from human experience, and superior to it. Since this world of Discourse is composed of Aristotelian norms, it will always be possible to determine which opinion grasps the subject most thoroughly and deeply—the grasp of the hierarchy of the elite who seek only the pre-established norms.

Evaluation involves no evaluating process; it comes from taking a position of loving contemplation of "values" (that is, "essences") which have their locus in the work of art.

## III

Now, all this is what I referred to in my title: "The New Criticism Contemplates the Fireworks on the

Fifth of July." May I take a moment to interpret that title. Its meaning is not in the words but in the reference to the context of experience in which they emerged—like all meaning. In one of his lectures to his students in Microscopy at the Harvard Medical School, Professor Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "Remember, young men, when you are examining cells under the microscope, it is precisely like looking at the fireworks on the Fifth of July. When you observe them the cells are dead, the fire of life has gone out of them; but what you are trying to find is how they must have functioned when they were in process." That was one of the early cries, even in science, for giving over the principle of "objectivity."

And to me it is high time in literature to have done with contemplative objectivity.

We have got beyond a "kosmos" of static things in space. Discussion that strains at discrete categories cannot deal with a philosophy of experience as process and a psychology of realization as process. Existence is meaningless in our day unless we understand, as Whitehead puts it, that process is reality and that only individuated ideation can create value. Unless we acknowledge the new norms of the Modern Climate of Opinion, we certainly cannot understand the youth in whom we have committed ourselves to stimulate a developmental enrichment of their experiencing process. In any case, I have found it necessary to apply to the understanding of literature as a mode of processive experience the methods already so adequately available in MODERN FUNCTIONAL ESTHETICS, which are so particularly congenial to the cultural pattern in which and for which we are teaching literature.

I assume that that writing only is "literature" which contributes to the function of art in a cultural pattern.

The function of the creative artist in his cultural pattern is to create the means by which objects of art in a certain medium become the functioning works of art of his time. To do so they must express the emergent values of human experience which the artist has realized. But more than this, they must convey to sensitized appreciators a stimulation to realization of the potential richness of their common share in man's cumulative achievement. When a writer accomplishes this, he is offering literature to his time.

To develop a sensitivity to literary values, the appreciator needs a philosophy of experience harmonic with his cultural pattern,

which he participates in with the artist whose work he is attempting to evaluate; and he must have an understanding of the psychological process of realization. He can benefit by the achievement of semantic discipline in the problem of understanding what is offered, intended, meant in the medium being used—which is to say, a training in Ideatics as well as Significa. And since esthetic realization is that of a discovered pattern of values in human experiencing, all the dynamic (modern) psychology of individual and social tensions and interrelationships now becoming available, is of inestimable use in sensing the relative significance of esthetic and artistic levels of experience; and, finally, it will clarify the value of art as experience to the cumulative self of the appreciator as a citizen of his world. Thus the evaluation of a work of art involves a clarification of its meaning, significance, and value.

May I conclude by restating these conceptions as a method of teaching the evaluation of a literary work of art?

1) What are we talking about when we presume to talk about literature?

2) What happens when reading is lifted to the level on which literary experiencing occurs?

## MEANING:

3) What clues are there in the object of art—especially its title—which have reference to the philosophic and artistic perspectives of the author and thereby indicate the base of value from which his esthetic realization took shape?

4) To what degree does the treatment of experience cumulatively penetrate the organic process and quality of human experience so that a participative insight is made available to the appreciator?

## SIGNIFICANCE:

5) In view of such a sensitization, what does a survey of the high-lighted elements reveal by way of specific referents to the constellated elements in the artist's esthetic realization?

6) What is the pattern of relationships between the ideas intended and the context of human living from which they have been distilled?

## VALUE:

7) To what degree does the total artistic experience of the evaluator become a useful point of reference for achieving subsequent, more responsive artistic realization?

8) What contribution to the appreciator's sensitivity to the potential richness of life, can be fairly ascribed to the intention of

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the artist?

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It seems to me, as I have said, that it is high time we gave up a loving contemplation of the fireworks on the fifth of July, and got to work.

Edward A. Post  
Boston University  
(As condensed by Eric Carlson,  
University of Connecticut)

## Executive Secretary Represents C.E.A. At Educational Parley

Your executive secretary was one of the speakers and resource persons at a consultation on education for international understanding at Vassar, under the auspices of the World Student Service Fund. Staff workers of the W.S.S.F. joined guest consultants in exploring principles and practices of a program on the college and university level, for furthering international understanding and cultural exchange.

Other consultants were Gordon Klopff, Personnel Services, University of Wisconsin; John Finch (Harvard), director of the Salzburg Institute of American studies.

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## The Essence Of Innumerable Biographies

### Field Trips Of A Yeats Biographer

Prof. Richard Ellmann of Harvard University has informally told of his experiences in collecting material for a biography of Yeats. His attempts to fix the qualities of the elusive poet had occupied him more than a year in England and Ireland. He found Mrs. Yeats very cooperative, and the large number of manuscripts she made available were of immense value. It was difficult to get a coherent picture of Yeats' life in Dublin and London, but since the poet knew many people in all walks of life, it was possible to procure a considerable mass of personal data.

Mr. Ellmann made interesting and witty remarks on three groups of people whom he met in his search for Yeatsiana. The first consisted of those who knew much, and most of it wrong. Chief among these was Alexander Crowley, a specialist in occult lore and magic, who told a startling tale of Yeats helping a friend exorcise the evil eye which Crowley had put upon her. This story, while probably fabricated or at least farfetched, did illustrate Yeats' interest in the occult.

The second group included those people who knew little but were interesting folk in their own right. Edith Sitwell and Dorothy Wellesley, Duchess of Wellington, for instance, had no special revelations,

but they helped to recreate the social milieu in which Yeats moved. Mr. Ellmann also met Maud Gonne, whose anxiety to maintain the picture of her romantic love for Yeats rather vitiated the force of her testimony. The third group consisted of those who had something significant to reveal, among them Shaw and Frank O'Connor. The diverse testimony offered by these three groups provided evidence of Yeats' deliberate construction of poses or masks, and of his playing many parts.

The researches of Mr. Ellmann were not without direct result on the interpretation of the poems. The stylistic change which took place in 1903, for instance, cannot be explained without reference to his life as well as to his literary imagination. Many of the poems were made clearer by such biographical study, for Yeats intended his work to be closely related to the facts of his external experience.

Paul E. Reynolds  
Rhode Island State College

*Isn't it the heart of liberal education that people come to live at ease with ideas and books and conversation, and use the techniques of communication only as their servants? Isn't this a treasure that we as English teachers secrete in each of our pupils as he becomes increasingly entangled in a world of specialized techniques, and nowhere else finds proportion, thought, and humanity?*

—Harry W. Walen, editor, *The English Leaflet*, (February, 1950)

### The Indefinable 'Bouquet' of Actual Existence

In a luminous talk, Rollo Walter Brown has stressed that the problem of selecting the subject for biographic portraiture is of prime importance. Not every person is a proper subject, for the biographical portraiture goes far beyond setting down the essential official information of a man's life. Such matters are easy but give only the cold statement of fact of the newspaper obituary. To make a subject live, to provide the details which give it the indefinable "bouquet" of actual existence are the necessary difficulties of biographical portraiture. Biography has travelled a long road, a road of constantly widening horizons, since it was held that saints, kings, and the upper classes of society produced its only fitting material. But there are certain characteristics which a successful biographer must train himself to recognize in people if his writing is to be more than a chronicle of what his

(Continued col. 3, top)

subject did. For without them the "bouquet", the aura of real life will be missing.

The first characteristic is that of individuality. Most people do not have it; or, rather, they do not retain it long. They possessed individuality when they were young, but as they grow older, they become case-hardened and merely follow the ways of the world. Seldom are they really themselves; most people are most natural on Sunday when there is no demand that they present to the world the all too familiar facets of their week-day personalities. But of such people, of people in the lump, there is no reason that the story should be told more than once. It is all too well known: the same motives, the same reactions, the same hopes and fears; all is shaped and blunted by society into the same patterns. The biographer must look beyond them, seeking the sharp edges of individuality that cut into life, that reveal integrity maintained against all effects of blunting and shaping. And one never knows where this distinctive quality will be found. The quiet by-paths of a

interesting life.

Too, an aspiration, passionately held, may impart to a life the third characteristic of a good subject: dynamic tension. This quality Mr. Brown defines as "the life stretched to the breaking point." This tension may come through one of life's great misfortunes, in spite of which the aspiration is held, the vision is followed. Basil King, going blind, yet wrote *The Inner Shrine and The Conquest of Fear*. Again, it may come from the cost of living intellectually alone, for "It isolates one anywhere to think beyond a certain point"; and because democracy has too often exerted a leveling effect upon culture, such isolation has never been popular. Each of the "individualists" portrayed in *Lonely Americans* knew the tension of such an isolation. Whatever the generating force, it is this something of intensity in a life that provides the dramatic quality for which the biographer is looking.

But above all, the biographer must seek a subject with whom he is fundamentally in sympathy. Unlike Lytton Strachey and his school of biography, Mr. Brown strongly holds that harmony between subject and biographer, not antagonism, is the essential of true understanding. "When we are negative to people, we cannot gain full understanding of them. When we are in sympathy with them, we discover what is really there." Only this accord, the final characteristic of the potential subject, can give the biographer a fair chance to know all there is and to do his best with that knowledge. William H. Moss, Boston Univ.

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### C.E.A. Member Lectures

On January 16, Professor George W. Sherburn, Chairman of the English Department of Harvard University, lectured to an audience of 400 on the subject, "Is Poetry an Intellectual Art?" This was given as the George F. Reynolds lecture for the year.

The annual meeting of the Speech Association of America had eight members of this department participating. Professors E. J. West, Margaret Robb, Dorothy Anderson, and Thorrel B. Fest gave papers.

### C.E.A. Membership Cultural Insurance

I am not teaching at present but would like to continue my membership in the association.

(Mrs.) Otis L. Whitaker  
Newberry College  
South Carolina

—We have received other notices of coming withdrawal of present C.E.A. members. In the other instances, we have read, with regret, that retirement has meant withdrawal from membership in the association. We know that, in most cases, the pressure of needed economies for living on reduced income, causes the resignation. Yet we believe that continued membership in our Association is a form of cultural insurance, helping to make our retired leisure a meaningful continuation of the active professional life to which we have been accustomed.

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## Personals

James S. Harvey, formerly at Samson College, New York, is now teaching at the Canton branch of Kent State University. He writes that, at present, "I am trying to build a chapter of C.E.A. here."

—More power to you . . . and may many C.E.A. members at other colleges and universities follow your excellent example. If you need any help from the national office, don't hesitate to call on us.

Ernest Bernbaum is to be in Europe from March, 1950, for a year or two, moving from place to place.

Francis E. Smith, formerly at Colby College, is now completing studies toward the doctorate at the State University of Iowa. His dissertation is on the subject of "Thomas Love Peacock and the Romantic Era."

Helen Griffith, emeritus professor from Mount Holyoke College, and now at Tougaloo College, Tougaloo, Miss., is "just teaching two English courses out of interest and curiosity at this only liberal arts college for negroes in the state of Miss."

Renate C. Wolff, formerly at Wilkes College, is working on her doctorate at Bryn Mawr College. Her thesis subject is the naturalistic English novel in the late nineteenth century.

Amy M. Charles, of Westminster College, is now on leave to continue graduate work at the University of Pennsylvania.

Arthur Monk, formerly at Bates College, is completing graduate studies toward the doctorate at Boston University.

James Ryan, on leave from Alfred University, is completing graduate studies toward the doctorate at Boston University. His thesis subject has to do with Gilbert K. Chesterton as literary critic.

In addition to his regular work as instructor, Warren B. Bezanson, of the University of Maryland, is carrying on a graduate program in American Civilization, under the guidance of Carl Bode. His dissertation topic is "Politics and Publishing in America, 1870-1891."

National Director T. M. Pearce, University of New Mexico, will be teaching at New York University this summer.

Aileen Creighton, regularly at Del Mar College, Corpus Christi, Texas, and now on leave from that institution, is this year teaching part-time at the University of Texas. Because of her change of address, she has not been receiving her copies of THE CEA CRITIC, and writes that she misses them. She requests copies of back issues and also a copy of the 1948 Chap Book containing the "very thoughtful and stimulating lecture" on "The Survival Quotient in Teaching Literature" by Paul Landis of the University of Illinois. "I had two copies," writes Mrs. Creighton, "but gave both away."

These requests are the sort we like to get.

### University of New Mexico College Teaching Sights Re-Aligned

On Saturday, February 11, a conference of high school and college English teachers was held at the University of New Mexico. Burges Johnson attended.

The program was as follows: 9:30 a.m., registration of high school and college teachers; 10:00 a.m., conference on cadet teaching program for teachers in high school and first year college classes—Professor Kuntz, Chairman; 11:00 a.m. report on the University of New Mexico English Workshop by Mr. David Kroft.

There were a number of participants in the section on cadet teaching, and practical suggestions were made for rapport between the English Department and the College of Education in the guidance of neophyte teachers.

In comment, T. M. Pearce, head of the department of English at the University of New Mexico, and national C.E.A. director, observes: "I believe this is the first time we have ever thought concretely about our program for English majors as preparation for the high school teacher. I'm afraid our sights are nearly always trained toward the college M.A. with a narrower focus on the Ph.D. Our workshop here is a new venture emphasizing a testing program, remedial reading, and a combination of lecture-tutor instruction. It has a period of cadet teacher training and seems to be a success."

## Florida State University Syllabus

### Written Communication

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We have a 140-page printed syllabus outlining our course in Written Communication (Freshman English) copies of which I will be glad to send free to members of the College English Association on request. The course itself—we think it's a good one—is described in *Communication in General Education*, edited by Earl James McGrath, U. S. Commissioner of Education, (Wm. C. Brown Company, Publishers, Dubuque, Iowa), 1949.

J. P. Stoakes  
Chairman

Communication Through Language  
Florida State University  
Tallahassee, Florida

Mamie Jane Meredith (University of Nebraska), Vice President, Mid-West, of the American Business Writing Association, was chairman of two meetings at the Spring 1949 Conference of the Central States Speech Association: (1) a panel discussion of basic courses in business writing; (2) a round table discussion of problems in teaching Business English. She was also chairman of the first regional meeting (Omaha) of the A. B. W. A. The new A. N. Marquis' *Who Knows . . . And What*, lists her for American language research and business writing.

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### Coming in April ENGLISH MASTERPIECES

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**Freshman English Target . . .***(Concluded from page 1, col. 1)*

literate; the semi-literate become literate; and the literate become literate—or so we like to believe.

Freshman Composition is taught by a miscellaneous and heterogeneous staff of teachers: from young graduate assistants whose only goal in life at the time is a Ph.D.; through young instructors with a Ph.D. who are eyeing the greener pastures of literature, from which, if they "arrive," they sneeringly refer to the "grubbers" doing composition work; to teachers of literature who are willingly or willy-nilly condescending to teach a section or two in the recent crisis of inundation; through all these to a final group ranging in age from youth to grizzled greybeards who have unbelievably found a certain pleasure in the course and who, unbelievably also, consider it a course not only worthy of being taught but being taught well.

In content, Freshman Composition includes such necessary incidentals as spelling, grammar, punctuation, diction. It teaches vocabulary building, the use of the dictionary, and the use of the library. It utilizes handbooks, rhetorics, exercise books, books of readings, and fiction and non-fiction outside-reading books. It tries to clarify unity, coherence, and emphasis. It speaks in detail of matters dealing with phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs. It teaches choosing and limiting a subject; adaptation; outlining, planning, and organization; gathering of materials; and writing. All these that the student

may make contributions to that unique form of literature, the theme, and to the term or research paper.

In teaching theme-writing, it teaches, hither and yon, the various divisions of narrative, description, exposition, and argument; it includes along the way the amenities of social correspondence and the proprieties of business correspondence. In addition, it explores the inner and outer life of its students; it trains them to think; it stresses interracial understanding; it develops democratic ideals, social ideals, humanistic ideals, and international ideals. In recent years also, it has begun to include instruction in the details of speaking, reading, and listening. And all these in three hours a week of classroom instruction lasting in some places for one semester and in most places for two semesters. Thereafter these students are supposed never to retrogress but to write, speak, listen, and read in the manner of a properly qualified college graduate.

By way of summary: Freshman Composition ranges from the minuscule of vowels and consonants to the vast and unmeasured universe of interstellar space.

George S. Wykoff  
Purdue University

### **Wanted: More Letters and Editorials**

I have been a member of C.E.A. since its inception and have much interest in its growth and strengthening . . . As to THE CRITIC, I like more letters . . . and editorials, less of the type of article summarizing speeches at regional meetings.

Joseph C. Giddings  
South Dakota State College

### **Northwest Missouri Writers' Club**

The Writers' Club and the local chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, under the leadership of a member of the English faculty, is sponsoring, this year, a book of college verse. It is hoped that this project will create more interest in creative writing among the students and inspire those who are writing verse secretly to affiliate with the writing groups.

Mattie M. Dykes  
Professor of English  
Northwest Missouri State College  
Maryville, Missouri

### **EPISTLE TO THE DEAD**

A publisher's circular addressed to  
Dead of the Department

### **CRITIC CONTRIBUTORS LECTURE In Conn. Valley**

By pleasant coincidence, two recent contributors to the CEA CRITIC, both of whom spoke at the Boston University conference of the N.E.C.E.A., lectured within a couple of days of each other, before Connecticut Valley audiences. On Wednesday, March 1, regional director John Ciardi (Harvard) spoke at the University of Massachusetts, under the auspices of the University Quarterly, on the subject of the Twayne edition of *Mid-Century Poets*, and he read from his own poems. He had just returned from an authors' symposium at the University of Kentucky. On Friday, March 3, Joseph Warren Beach, visiting professor of English at Harvard University, spoke at Smith College, before an overflow audience, on the subject of "Symbolism in the Modern American Novel."

Following is a news report of Prof. Beach's lecture (adapted from the *Hampshire Gazette*):

The essence of symbolism, Mr. Beach implied, was the fact that a word usually stands for much more than the ordinary meaning of the word; for example, a father is more than a father and a machine is more than a machine.

Starting with Herman Melville, he traced this technique in writing through the 20th century novelists, noting that symbolism is particularly seen in the works of Sherwood Anderson, Ernest Hemingway, Dos Passos, Thomas Wolfe, and William Faulkner.

Anderson's *Poor White* and Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* were outlined in detail, and the speaker pointed out the wide application of symbolism in each novel. In present day fiction, Mr. Beach concluded, the use of basic symbolism is more important and more common than such a device was thought to be twenty years ago. The tracing of symbolism has very often proved to be of tremendous aid in critical evaluation of literature.

### **Late Release Southeastern Pennsylvania Spring Meeting**

Bruce Dearing, of Swarthmore, announces, as the head of the Program Committee, that the spring meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania C.E.A. will be held at Swarthmore on Saturday, April 22. Francis Mason, of Gettysburg College, is president of this regional C.E.A. group.

### **University of Wyoming Expanded Summer Program: Creative Arts**

The University of Wyoming is making plans for an expanded summer program in Creative Arts with course work, lectures, symposia, concerts, recitals, and exhibits in the areas of music, drama, the dance, and literature. Visitors in literature in the summer of 1950 will be Paul Eng and Walter van Tilburg Clark. In charge is Professor Joseph Langland.

Wilson O. Clough  
University of Wyoming

### **Tufts College Rapid Reading Program**

From Tufts College New England regional director Genevieve Birk reports, tentatively, the local opinion that "there are great possibilities in a rapid reading program," and requests information as to how materials and tests are being provided in such programs elsewhere. THE CRITIC would be glad to publish information concerning this subject.

### **A Good and Lively Group**

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